

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

May 10, 2005

The meeting of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations was called to order on Tuesday, May 10, 2005 at 10:10 a.m., in Baltimore, Maryland.

Present

Thomas Owen, Sambhu Banik, John Hermina, Norman Gelman and Peter Lee.

**APPROVAL OF THE
MINUTES**

The minutes of the April meeting were accepted as written.

**CHAIRPERSON'S
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the Chairperson's Report (See attached).

New Commissioner

Chairperson Owen introduced and welcomed Dr. Sambhu Banik to the Commission. Chairperson Owen also stated that another Commissioner has been appointed, Ms. Jo Ann Fisher.

Guest Speaker

Chairperson Owen introduced the guest speaker for today, Ms. Silvia Navas, Employment Program Senior Manager of CASA of Maryland, Inc. CASA has grown to be the largest Latino service and advocacy organization in the State of Maryland, serving immigrants from all over Latin America and Africa, in addition to U.S. born citizens. CASA provides advocacy for better access to housing, employment, health, education, legal services, and political process for the persons they serve. Ms. Navas shared much valuable information regarding the problems facing immigrant workers in her community.

**Guest Speaker for the Month
of June**

The Public Affairs Coordinator informed Commissioners that Carmen Pratt, Executive Coordinator of the Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Governor's Commission on Asian and Civil American Affairs, the Commission on Immigratory and Farm Labor and the Women's Commission, will speak at the June Commission meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Commissioners received copies of the Executive Director's Report (See attached). The Executive Director informed Commissioners that the Governor signed Senate Bill 518, which authorizes the Commission to seek and receive gifts and grants from various non-profits and organizations.

HUD

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that the Assistant Secretary of Fair Housing for HUD has resigned. MCHR does not know what effect if any, this resignation would have on fair housing funds to state agencies.

MAHRA

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that the Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies (MAHRA), which is comprised of directors and/or heads of state and local human rights and human relations agencies of Maryland, will be sponsoring training for Commissioners in the fall. The Executive Director would like Commissioners' input as to what type of training they would prefer.

Commissioner Gelman stated that he would like to know what the difference is in state law and laws of local jurisdictions.

Community Outreach/ Education Unit Transfer of Responsibilities Training

The Public Affairs Coordinator informed Commissioners that the position of Public Affairs Coordinator has been eliminated from MCHR's budget. The Public Affairs Coordinator also stated that she has been supervising the Training Specialist, who will remain at MCHR in a slightly different role. The Community Outreach/Education Unit has formed partnerships with other agencies and entities. The unit has been training, on average, 300-400 people a month. Conducting this training has enabled MCHR to reach businesses and non-profit organizations and people, who unless filed complaints, would not have contact with the agency. The Public Affairs Coordinator also stated that the unit has been doing public affairs, media contacts, press releases, and annual reports every year, and has also served as legislative liaison. MCHR's brochures are being updated and will be reprinted.

Commissioner Banik requested that the Public Affairs Coordinator speak to the Human Relations Commission in Montgomery County during one of their meetings. The Montgomery County Commission meets on the last Monday of each month. The Public Affairs Coordinator stated that she would be delighted to speak.

Chairperson Owen and Commissioners reviewed and discussed the memo from the Public Affairs Coordinator regarding Transfer of Responsibilities (See Attached). Keith Merkey will be staying with MCHR and will continue conducting some of the training. The

Executive Director's Executive Associate will serve as the legislative contact with the Governor's office. The General Counsel will be the primary contact regarding content of legislation.

One of the responsibilities of the legislative liaison is to review all legislation that is submitted at least a couple times a week. Bobette Watts, who has previous experience in this area, will assume this duty.

Chairperson Owen would like Ms. Watts to attend one of the Commission meetings.

Commissioner Gelman would like to see a memorandum on what things will not get done as a result of the elimination of the Public Affairs Coordinator's position. This memo would be helpful in the future when MCHR may be able to restore this position.

Annual Report

The Executive Director assured the Commissioners that MCHR is mandated to prepare an Annual Report and it will get done.

Public Affairs Inquiries

In reference to Public Affairs inquiries, the General Counsel informed Commissioners that in the past attorneys have had various contacts and field inquiries and requests from the media. The General Counsel stated that individual attorneys had contact with different reporters whom they would call about their individual cases, and ask them to come to do a report or attend a public hearing and do a story.

Chairperson Owen stated that MCHR has to be very intentional, making sure that someone has been assigned these tasks. These tasks have to be prioritized.

Outreach Activities

The Training Specialist, with the help of other MCHR staff, will coordinate outreach activities.

Chairperson Owen stated that he would like MCHR to continue obtaining speakers to continue the dialogue that Commissioners have been working on in reference to immigration problems in Maryland. MCHR should consider how to utilize Senate Bill 518 to continue to carry out some of the responsibilities of the COEU unit.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Commissioners received copies of the Deputy Director's Report (See attached). The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that intake has been up for the last three months. The Deputy Director also gave credit to the case processing staff. MCHR is ahead in both of its contracts. Time in processing of cases has lowered.

MCHR is about to embark on a new data system that has been developed by EEOC. MCHR is one of the first agencies in the

country to come on-line with this new system. MCHR will begin testing next Monday, training will begin on June 6 and as of the 13th of June MCHR should be on-line.

Federal Contracts
EEOC

The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that MCHR is in a great position in both contracts, in terms of what MCHR has accomplished this year. MCHR received the EEOC contract. MCHR will be able to request an upward modification to the contract. The evaluation period for the EEOC contract ends June 30, 2005. Funds should be available for an upward modification.

HUD

The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that MCHR has not received the HUD contract yet.

Grants

The Deputy Director also stated that HUD issued a notice of funding availability. All grant proposals have to be filed electronically; there have been problems in downloading the application. The grant proposal is due May 23, 2005. There is an education and outreach initiative that MCHR will also apply for.

Chairperson Owen inquired as to what the funds would be used for. The Deputy Director stated that the funds would be used to educate realtors regarding Maryland state law.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the Assistant Director's Report (See attached). The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that MCHR is finishing up the fiscal year 2005 budget and anticipate no problems in closing in the black.

**GENERAL COUNSEL'S
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the General Counsel's Report (See attached). The General Counsel informed Commissioners that training was conducted for Administrative Law Judges regarding Fair Housing and Disability regulations.

MCHR Regulation Review

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the Office of Administrative Hearings was the only constituent that sent in comments to MCHR's regulations.

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the next step in the review of MCHR's regulations is to research federal and state laws to see if there have been any new changes or regulations that should be considered or looked at from other states and the federal government.

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that there are a couple of items in the Fair Housing regulations that need to be adjusted, in particular, housing for older persons. There was an adjustment made by Congress in 1995 to eliminate the service requirement for persons 55 years or older, who have housing. There is some language in

MCHR's regulations that refer to this and that language will be removed from the regulations. After this process the final regulations will be drafted. The draft will be presented to Commissioners for review and approval.

Commission meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Barbara Wilson